

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LONDON 05067 042115Z

73

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 L-02 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /049 W
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O R 041117Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9865

INFO SECDEF IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR

CINCUSAFE

HQ 3AF RAF MILDENHALL

S E C R E T LONDON 05067

SECDEF FOR JCS AND SAFOI

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MILI, OCLR, GW, UK, NL

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN DEPLOYMENT OF ADVANCE LOCATION STRIKE
SYSTEM (ALSS)

REF: (A) LONDON 4610 (B) STATE 37079
(C) STATE 58876

1. JACKSON OF FCO CALLED US IN APRIL 3 TO DISCUSS STATUS OF HMG CONSIDERATION OF ALSO PRESS GUIDANCE. ROBSON OF MOD ALSO PRESENT. ROBSON REPORTED THAT SECRETARY MASON HAS NOW STUDIED FILE PERSONALLY AND CANNOT ACCEPT FORMULATION SET OUT REF (C). ACCORDING TO ROBSON, MASON SAID REF (C) FORMULATION WOULD INVITE A PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION ON WHAT PROGRAM INVOLVES IN ADDITION TO HIGH ALTITUDE PRECISION NAVIGATION. HE WOULD BE UNABLE TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION IN SATISFACTORY MANNER AND PROJECT WOULD BECOME A MATTER OF POLITICAL CONTROVERSY.

2. THROUGHOUT CONVERSATION JACKSON AND ROBSON STRESSED
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 LONDON 05067 042115Z

THAT BOTH MOD AND FCO HEARTILY APPROVE OF ALSS PROGRAM,

WISH IT TO TAKE PLACE AND WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO SUPPORT PROGRAM. BUT MINISTERS MUST BE ABLE TO DEFEND PROGRAM IN PARLIAMENT WHERE QUESTIONS ARE INEVITABLE.

3. ROBSON SAID THAT CHIEF OF AIR STAFF HAS SUGGESTED THAT FIRST SENTENCE PARA TWO REF (B) MIGHT BE ALTERED BY WORD "EVALUATING" IN PLACE OF WORD "OF" AS A SOLUTION. ROBSON SAID MASON IS NOT AWARE OF THIS SUGGESTION BUT PROBABLY WOULD ACCEPT. JACKSON SAID THAT THIS CHANGE ALONE WOULD NOT HAVE TO BE CLEARED WITH FCO MINISTERS.

4. OTHER OUTSTANDING ISSUE IS PLACEMENT OF STATEMENT THAT ALSS U-2'S WILL NOT BE ARMED OR UNDERTAKE PHOTOGRAPHY. OFFICIALS ARE NOW PREPARED TO ACCEPT THIS SENTENCE IN CONTINGENCY STATEMENT ITSELF VICE Q'S AND A'S. THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE CLEARED BY MINISTERS BUT IT SHOULD NOT BE CONTENTIOUS OR TIME-CONSUMING.

5. COMMENT: BRITISH UNDERSTAND CLEARLY THAT REF (B) FORMULATION IS NOT: "THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH" BUT IT DOES NOT LEAVE AN OBVIOUS LOOPHOLE INVITING FURTHER PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS. THEIR MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO MINIMIZE PARLIAMENTARY PROBING. THEY RECOGNIZE THAT REF (C) IS AN ATTEMPT TO BE STRAIGHTFORWARD IN SAYING THAT TEST PROGRAM IS CLASSIFIED, BUT THEY PREFER TO LEAVE THIS POINT OBSCURE. OUR CONTACTS EMPHASIZED THAT THEY DO NOT WANT THE U.S. TO INTERPRET THE BRITISH POSITION AS APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE MADE SO CONDITIONAL AS TO ACTUALLY CONSTITUTE A REFUSAL, BUT THEY DO FEEL THAT PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT MUST BE DONE IN A WAY WHICH IS MOST EFFECTIVE IN TERMS OF THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM.

RICHARDSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ALSS-ADVANCED LOCATION STRIKE SYS, MISSILES, MILITARY AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: WorrelSW
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON05067
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750117-0784
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750481/aaaacwcx.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LONDON 4610, 75 STATE 37079
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: WorrelSW
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by WorrelSW>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EUROPEAN DEPLOYMENT OF ADVANCE LOCATION STRIKE SYSTEM (ALSS)
TAGS: MILI, OCLR, GE, UK, NL
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006